

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the matter of)
ITA Informal Request for Certification)
to Coordinate the Power Radio Service,)
Railroad Radio Service, and Automobile)
Emergency Radio Service Under Part 90)
of the Commission's Rules)
_____)

Docket No. RM-10687

**BRIEF COMMENTS OF THE
NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION**

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (“NRECA”) offers these brief comments in the above captioned proceeding. NRECA is the not-for-profit, national service organization representing 930 rural electric systems, which serve 36 million customers in 47 states.¹ NRECA’s members depend upon private wireless communications systems to safely operate, monitor, control and repair their electric systems. NRECA members are part of the nation’s critical infrastructure, providing essential services and working in concert with local fire, police and rescue units in times of emergencies and natural disasters. These types of communications systems are unlike other types of private land mobile radio systems, and therefore they call for special expertise in the provision of coordination services.

NRECA’s members have utilized the spectrum coordination services of the United Telecom Council (“UTC”) before and since UTC was certified as a frequency

¹ NRECA is also a member of the Critical Infrastructure Communications Coalition.

coordinator in 1986. UTC recognizes the unique characteristics of systems operated within the power radio service frequencies and has demonstrated a thorough understanding of the operational requirements of these types of users and their interaction with public safety agencies. UTC is also heavily involved in the nation's Homeland Security efforts, and therefore has a deep understanding, not just of the day-to-day operations of critical infrastructure systems and their challenges, but of their future needs and concerns. Indeed, it was the Commission's own recognition of the quasi-public safety functions of the users of the power radio service, railroad and automobile emergency channels that prompted the designation of UTC, the American Railroad Association (ARA), and the American Automobile Association (AAA) as the exclusive coordinators for these frequencies, respectively.² Because NRECA concurs with the Commission's standing policy that the uses of these frequencies are of a special nature best served by exclusive coordinators, NRECA joins UTC, ARA, AAA and others, in opposing ITA's request for certification.

NRECA is not a supporter of competition just for competition's sake. Unless and until it can be demonstrated that competition will result in real benefits, such as lower prices and better and faster service, there is no reason for the Commission to change how frequency coordination is handled for the former power radio service frequencies. Unsupported claims in ITA's information request that granting ITA the requested coordinator certification will bring these advantages of competition are not sufficient.

² Replacement of Part 90 by Part 88 to Revise the Private Land Mobile Radio Services and Modify the Policies Governing Them and Examination of Exclusivity and Frequency Assignment Policies of the Private Land Mobile Radio Services, *Second Report & Order*, 12 FCC Rcd 14307, 14330 (1997) ("using coordinators who are knowledgeable with such special communication needs is the best way to protect these operations, which involve safety-related communications, and outweighs any potential benefits that may be gained through a competitive frequency coordination process."); *Second Memorandum & Order*, 14 FCC Rcd 8642.

Careful and thorough consideration of such claims should be made prior to any proposed change in Commission policy.

NRECA's opposition to ITA's request is not meant to denigrate the services ITA currently provides. However, NRECA feels strongly that UTC has a proven track record of coordination services that are based on its having the requisite experience and knowledge of the types of systems used by critical infrastructure. NRECA is also aware that UTC has responded quickly and affirmed requests when forwarded from ITA. If UTC was providing poor service or providing it at unreasonable rates, then perhaps the justification for the Commission to consider ITA's request would be more compelling. In NRECA's opinion, putting it very plainly, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these brief comments in this docket.

Respectfully submitted,

NATIONAL RURAL ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

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